Iraq - m H1

THE MIDDLE EAST

245 356 Iraq produces about 80 per cent. of the total
[439] world supply of dates—that is, of the proportion of dates that form an article of commerce, because most dates are eaten directly by the growers, or else bartered. The general conditions under which date palms thrive have already been touched upon, and it is sufficient to recall that the palms can flourish in dry, saline, sandy, loamy, or even water-logged soils, although the maximum yield of fruit is obtained when abundant water is available.

The region of the Shatt el Arab is pre-eminently suited to date-production, and both banks are lined with date groves extending inland for about a mile and a half. Some 25 to 30 million palms are cultivated throughout the region, and of these, one-half are found close to the Shatt el Arab, the rest occurring along the river banks as far north as Latitude 33° N. A curious feature is the rise of the river under the influence of the incoming tide. Fresh water is ponded back in the Shatt el Arab, and floods the banks to a depth of as much as 3 feet to provide natural and regular irrigation of the groves—a phenomenon that from the point of view of the native farmer is wholly estimable.

In order to ensure a good crop, the land is dug over once every four years; and because of the frequent presence of creeks and water-courses, this must be done by hand. Artificial pollination is, as we have already seen, highly necessary; and though most groves include 3 per cent. of male palms, the district of Fao has developed a special trade in male pollen dust, from which other date-growing regions are supplied.

About 130 varieties of date are known, but three are most widely grown. The *Halawi* palm produces the finest fruit, but gives only a moderate yield (44 lb. per tree) (Dowson), whilst the *Sayir* produces slightly less, but is more tolerant of inferior growing conditions, and is probably the most widely grown. The *Zahidi* does not give a fruit of high quality, but the yield is over 120 lb. per tree, and this compensates for the low price obtained. Fertilisation of the female palm takes place in April, and picking begins in August, when large numbers of nomadic tribesmen move into the date-growing areas to work as seasonal harvesters.

273 231 313 289 Besides forming an extremely important part of local diet, dates are used in the distilling of *arak*—the chief fermented beverage outside the vine-growing areas, and one thought to have value as a prophylactic against malaria. The crushed stones are fed to cattle, and both leaves and trunk of the palm are used in light constructional work (houses, boats, even bridges), and also in the manufacture of paper.

35q Hooper and Field S-5 (1934) 1937 MAI Iran MAI
Iraq MHI

I-I
824*
278*

This is a plant of Arabia, Syria, Iran, and Baluchistan, distributed also in Europe. The berries are like dried cherries, but full of pulp, in which are embedded many reniform, yellowish seeds. As sold in the bazaars, broken fragments of the red, accrescent calyces are mixed with the drug. The fruits are said by Schlimmer to be hydragogue and vermifuge. Achundow indicates their use in certain female complaints. Locally they are regarded as a remedy for syphilis, and are supposed to be intoxicating when taken in sufficient quantity.

Pimpinella Anisum L. (Umbelliferae)

278*

انیسون

824*

Anīsūn, Badian-i-rumi (Teh.); Antchibun, a corruption of Anisum (Tab.); Erva dos, from Portuguese Herba doce (Dymock); aniseed.

273 •
263

Ait.; Boiss. 2: 866; Schl.; Ph. Ind. 1: 131.

Field 25; 35A; 10 (Iraq); W.H.M.M. 150768; K.B. 330.

Aniseed is cultivated largely in the U.S.S.R., as well as in Iran, for its seed, which is employed as a condiment and medicine. The fruit is often confounded with fennel, as the Arabic name Badian in some districts is applied to aniseed and in others to fennel. Aniseed has been introduced into India from Iran, whence the supply for the Bombay market still comes. It is mainly a Mohammedan medicine and is given in cough mixtures, and as a flavoring agent. Arak-badiani or anise water, prepared by distillation, is mentioned by Schlimmer, and local spirit is still flavored with it. The active principle resides in an essential oil consisting of 80 to 90 per cent of solid anethol, which separates slightly below ordinary temperatures, and anisic methyl charvicol.

Piper Cubeba L. (Piperaceae)

278*
824*

کبابه چینی

Kabābah-i-chīnī (Teh., Isf.); Kabab-chini (Hind.); cubeb pepper.

Field 25, 440; W.H.M.M. 150880.

Cubeb or tailed pepper is imported from Malaya and Java; it was formerly supposed to have come from China. The commercial drug consists of nearly globular fruits measuring about 4 mm. in diameter, of grayish brown or black, reticulately wrinkled on the surface, and abruptly prolonged at the base into a slender stalk or "tail." Within the pericarp is a single seed. Cubebs exhale, when